


**Fall 2014**
**VOLUME 25 ISSUE 1**

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# AMBS window

## Connecting the Bible with our ethics

**Malinda Elizabeth Berry, PhD, assistant professor of theology and ethics**

**"E**verything is connected." This phrase may sound trite, but as I help shape AMBS conversations about creation care, I want an "organic" view to shape how we integrate our ethical concerns and biblical perspective. That will help us be channels of God's Healing River that makes cities glad and soothes parched lands.

Let me share an example from the presentation centered around food deserts that I did this fall at AMBS' Rooted and Grounded conference.

The US Department of Agriculture uses census data to track food deserts, which it defines as "urban neighborhoods and rural towns without ready access to fresh, healthy, and affordable food." Diabetes, obesity and heart disease are all linked to life in food deserts with over half of food desert dwellers (13.5 of 23.5 million) also being poor. But this is only one layer of the food security matrix.

Folks like LaDonna Redmond, a food justice advocate, and Laura Leete, a University of Oregon professor, are helping us notice that when relief—well-stocked grocery stores—come to some

neighborhoods, they replace food deserts with new problems: food hinterlands and food mirages, where food quality may be high but access to that food is low.

The assumption is that building a Trader Joe's, Whole Foods or Super Walmart will irrigate the food desert. Instead, these stores are the engines of the gentrification train. Newer businesses attract newer, often wealthier, residents. Older businesses and residents can no longer afford the property taxes, rents or other necessities, like groceries.

Commentators explain that when neighborhoods are at their lowest point, a typical financial solution puts a new grocery store front and center. Thus, a promising food source is also a tool for development that displaces people. Gentrification's race and class components mean young (often) white newcomers benefit, marginalizing long-time (often) black and brown residents.

Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada, like most North American denominations, have church buildings and congregants in all kinds of communities. Some are

witnessing gentrification, some know the loneliness of rural flight, and some are in food deserts or hinterlands.

I have started to think differently about where I fit into the web of life after participating in a 100-mile radius potluck group. We brought foods prepared with ingredients that had travelled 100 miles or less to our table. By learning more about foods produced nearby, we learned more about the rural communities that surrounded us. It even gave us—black, brown and white neighbors—a way to encourage our local supermarket chains to utilize local suppliers for produce.

When we pray for daily bread, we are saying that Christianity has something to do with our food system and with the way that public policy and what we eat have changed how and where we live.

When we think of ourselves as branches abiding in the vine, discipleship's biblical metaphors are a pathway to talking about how we want to participate in God's great work of healing our communities and healing our planet. ●

**Photo: Malinda Berry (center) meets with students Rhonda Yoder and Ben Bouwman.**

# Relying on God's abundance

## Rooted and Grounded conference on land and discipleship

**O**ur place in God's creation, and especially our relationship with the land, underscored the September 18–20 Rooted and Grounded conference at AMBS. Three keynote addresses drew from biblical texts to call us to greater faithfulness in our role as caretakers of creation. Each address also called us to greater trust in God's abundance to provide for us. We share brief excerpts here. For more information about the conference, visit [www.ambs.edu/rootedandgrounded](http://www.ambs.edu/rootedandgrounded)



### Ellen Davis

We have lost confidence that we can have enough without overproducing, without hoarding, without laying waste to our land. In other words, we have lost the vision that communities can produce food within the limits of nature, rather than industry producing food by violating those limits. This story [Jesus feeding the crowd in John 6:10–15] speaks to our lack of confidence. It speaks of the daily generosity of God working through the created order and sometimes even human

hands and heart. — *Ellen Davis, Amos Ragan Kearns Distinguished Professor of Bible and Practical Theology at Duke Divinity School, Durham, N.C., and author of Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible (Cambridge University Press, 2008).*



### S. Roy Kaufman

We have many models of traditional agrarian cultures that through long experience have learned to live sustainably and productively on the earth, and our Native American brothers and sisters are the primary example of that. These are always very tenuous, marginal, usually compromised, always exploited communities, as with Israel's own story in the Old Testament. But still these agrarian cultures and traditional peoples, including the Israelites and Christian communities of rural America today, do hold the best promise of being able to shape a sustainable future for the human family and to bring healing to this earth of God's creation, now so

badly disfigured by the exploits of urban civilization. — *S. Roy Kaufman, retired Mennonite pastor and author of Healing God's Earth: Rural Community in the Context of Urban Civilization (Wipf and Stock, 2013).*



### Barbara Rossing

Early Christians created village communities right in the midst of the city, right in the midst of the empire—joyful communities that lived differently. They shared. They practiced *koinonia*. They ate differently.

Today as in the first century, we are called to live according to that compelling joy-filled, counter-imperial vision, as communities deeply grounded and rooted in the love of Jesus and this vision of abundant life gathered around that tree of life with its leaves for the healing of the nations. — *Barbara Rossing, Professor of New Testament at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. Her publications include The Rapture Exposed: The Message of Hope in the Book of Revelation (Basic Books, 2004).* ●

### AMBS Window Fall 2014 Volume 25 Issue 1

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A seminary of  
Mennonite Church USA and  
Mennonite Church Canada

## ALUMNI NEWS

**SeongHan Kim (Master of Arts: Peace Studies 2003)**, media director of Korea InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, has been named a Hanson Fellow. He is a PhD student at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Chicago, studying intersections of missiology and peace studies.

**Jeni Hiatt Umble (Master of Divinity 1998)** serves part-time as pastor of Living Light of Peace (formerly Arvada Mennonite) in Arvada, Colo.

**Phil Bergey (Master of Arts: Theological Studies 1993)** received a PhD in Human and Organizational Systems from Fielding Graduate

University in Santa Barbara, Calif. He is an executive coach and process consultant with Design Group International and is currently also part-time interim lead pastor at Blooming Glen (Pa.) Mennonite Church.

**Timothy Singenstreu (Master of Divinity 2003)** was ordained June 15 at Salem Mennonite Church, Wooster, Ohio.

**Dorothy Jean Weaver (Master of Divinity 1977)** joined the editorial board for *The Journal of Inductive Biblical Studies* (JIBS), edited by David R. Bauer and Frederick J. Long of Asbury Theological Seminary. ●



# The gardens of AMBS

## Growing for ourselves and to share

Rain gardens ... fields of wildflowers and prairie grasses ... vegetable gardens and a plot filled with melons. They literally nourish us and others in our community as we eat and share the bounty.

Students have expanded their garden plots and experimented with making maple syrup and crab apple jelly from campus trees. Our first Seed to Feed plot allowed us to use campus space to provide fresh produce to others. ●



ABOVE: Ryan Harker, AMBS Master of Divinity student, harvested 400 pounds of melons this summer from a Seed to Feed plot on campus. AMBS joined an effort sponsored by Church Community Services in Elkhart to raise fresh produce for the food banks in the county.



ABOVE: Katerina Friesen (pictured) and Annika Krause tapped maple trees on campus and shared the resulting syrup along with corn bread for a morning break in spring.



LEFT: Adam Graber Roth, 2014 graduate now serving in Egypt, helped establish AMBS's first beehive. The wildflower gardens on campus provided nourishment for the bees, and the honey was used in meals for the Rooted and Grounded conference.

## YOUR GIFTS AT WORK

At AMBS, we have four days of thanksgiving. In addition to two Thanksgiving Days (October 13 for Canada and November 27 for the U.S.), we have two Giving Thanks Days in late October when we express appreciation for donors. **Donations from individuals, congregations and businesses constitute almost one-half of AMBS annual income.** AMBS relies on tuition for only about one-seventh of our income each year.

Your gifts support all students, faculty and staff, and each fall we say an additional "Thank you" for gifts that ease the financial burden for students. Many students receive some form of financial aid, and students with demonstrated gifts for leadership in the church receive full-tuition scholarships. **Your contributions help remove financial barriers and burdens** for students and in this way you are investing in future leaders and the future health of the church. ●





# AMBS PANORAMA

## **Anabaptist Witness launches**

The journal, *Anabaptist Witness* (formerly *Mission Focus*), published the first issue in October. This issue focuses on Anabaptist and Mennonite understandings of mission and the interchange among mission practice, missiology and Anabaptist identity.

All content is available at no charge online: [anabaptistwitness.org](http://anabaptistwitness.org). The site also provides information about purchasing print copies.

## **Resources for conversations on sexuality**

AMBS faculty are providing a collection of resources for conversations in the church during this time of discernment. Resources include careful biblical study, a call to praying for our enemies and a clear description of church governance. Visit [www.ambs.edu/publishing/sexuality-conversation.cfm](http://www.ambs.edu/publishing/sexuality-conversation.cfm).

Also visit Sara Wenger Shenk's post, "Patient Vigor," on her Practicing Reconciliation blog: [www.ambs.edu/publishing/2014/09/Patient-Vigor-for-interesting-times.cfm](http://www.ambs.edu/publishing/2014/09/Patient-Vigor-for-interesting-times.cfm)

## **Seminary Preview Days**

Do you know someone who should be part of the 2015 incoming seminary class? Encourage him or her to plan a campus visit. Seminary Preview Days, March 27 and April 24, are the best times to meet professors and students and learn about financial aid and degrees. Register at [www.ambs.edu/visitAMBS](http://www.ambs.edu/visitAMBS)

## **Wilma Bailey recognized**

Wilma Bailey, professor emerita of Hebrew and Aramaic Scripture at Christian Theological Seminary



in Indianapolis, Ind., received this year's Alumni Ministry and Service Recognition. She presented a paper at the Rooted and Grounded conference and returned October 16 for the recognition celebration.

## **Pastors Week, January 26–29**

**Where culture blurs theology: What is an Anabaptist Christian?** will focus the conversation at Pastors Week. Four speakers will address questions of identity from their perspectives:

- Greg Boyd, PhD
  - Drew Hart, PhD student
  - Janet Plenert, MDiv
  - Elizabeth Soto Albrecht, DMin
- Visit [www.ambs.edu/pastorsweek](http://www.ambs.edu/pastorsweek) for further information.

## **Trail of Death pilgrimage**

**A nine-day pilgrimage next summer will trace the path of the 1838 forced relocation of the Potawatami Indians from their ancestral home in northern Indiana to present-day Osawatomie, Kan.** David B. Miller, AMBS associate professor, will lead *The Trail of Death: A Pilgrimage of Remembrance, Lament, and Transformation*. The experience will be scheduled just prior to the Mennonite Church USA convention in Kansas City. Watch for further details at [www.ambs.edu/trailofdeath](http://www.ambs.edu/trailofdeath). ●

## PRESIDENT'S WINDOW SARA WENGER SHENK



It was an ordinary weekday evening, but the meal was festive. To commemorate my husband Gerald's completion of a difficult writing project, I had prepared two highly spiced Ethiopian dishes for dinner. Our sons (then small boys) were delighted to rip off pieces of flat *injera* and dip them into the spicy *wat*.

While dousing flames in his mouth with gulps of water, our then six-year-old remarked, "I can't believe it! Just the simplest things at home can be so exciting!" I sank back into my chair for a quiet moment of exultation. Gerald's

eyes shone across the table.

Food shared around table with family, friends, brothers and sisters in Christ, neighbors, even strangers, is among the most treasured blessings of what it is to be human.

Much of Jesus' ministry, both before and after his resurrection, took place at table. Most striking are the companions he chose to eat with. When Jesus ate and drank with those considered to be of questionable character, he extended shalom to "outsiders." When he fed the hungry, he demonstrated the very present goodness and justice of the reign of God. Jesus' table practices and sharing of food were inseparably linked with his mission to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

The early church continued Jesus' table practices, frequently "breaking bread" together, welcoming outsiders who were drawn to the goodness of life in Christ. As they participated around the Lord's Table, they remembered Jesus' death and celebrated his living presence

made known to them in "the breaking of the bread."

During the Rooted and Grounded conference, we were reminded that enjoying the fruits of the earth is a central theme of the Scriptures. The energy among the participants was phenomenal. Trisha Tull, Professor Emerita of Old Testament at Louisville Presbyterian Seminary, wrote to student Ryan Harker: "*Thank you for helping create the most satisfying, well-organized conference I've ever attended. I loved the way it combined academic sophistication with wondrous worship, experiential opportunities, lovely new connections, and a peaceful, hopeful setting.*"

We desperately need a revolution of hope at home—with children who thrive on the simple pleasures of the family table. And we desperately need a revolution of hope in our congregations and communities—readily offering warm hospitality around Christ's table and our dinner tables to those hungering for food and fellowship. ●